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FM AMEMBASSY MANAMA
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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 MANAMA 003641

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y - ADDED DUSHANBE

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/29/11

TAGS: PGOV PREL AF BA

SUBJECT: AMIR TO SECRETARY POWELL ON AFGHANISTAN'S
FUTURE: GET A GOVERNMENT ON THE GROUND

REF: A) STATE 187567 B) MANAMA 3624

(U) CLASSIFIED BY AMBASSADOR RONALD E. NEUMANN. REASONS
1.5 (B)(D)

¶1. (S) SUMMARY. BAHRAIN'S AMIR WELCOMES THE U.S. FOCUS
ON REPLACING THE TALIBAN AND FORMING A BROAD-BASED
GOVERNMENT. HE URGED THAT WE GET SOME FORM OF
GOVERNMENT ON THE GROUND QUICKLY TO BECOME A LEGITIMATE
SPOKESMAN FOR AFGHANISTAN AND TURN THE TALIBAN INTO
INSURGENTS. WITH SUCH A STEP HE THINKS THE LENGTH OF
THE WAR WILL BECOME LESS IMPORTANT, AND WITHOUT IT THE
PUBLIC PROBLEM WILL GROW. HIS PS: CAN'T YOU DO
SOMETHING ON PULLING THE PLUG ON AL JAZEERA? WE DO NOT
RECOMMEND THIS. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (S) DURING THE CALL BY SECRETARY OF THE NAVY GORDON
ENGLAND ON BAHRAIN'S AMIR SHAIKH HAMAD BIN ISA OCTOBER
29, THE AMBASSADOR REVIEWED SECRETARY POWELL'S ORAL
MESSAGE ON AFGHANISTAN (REFTEL A). THE AMIR AGREED WITH
THE THRUST OF CREATING A BROAD-BASED GOVERNMENT KEEPING
THE UN IN THE LEAD ON ASSISTANCE, AND THE REMOVAL OF THE
TALIBAN ("ESSENTIAL"). HOWEVER, THE AMIR FOCUSED HIS
ATTENTION ON THE NEED TO MOVE SPEEDILY TO PUT AN AFGHAN
GOVERNMENT ON THE GROUND. HE MADE CLEAR THAT IT IS THE
SYMBOLISM AND NOT THE REALITY OF CONTROL THAT HE
BELIEVES IS ESSENTIAL.

¶3. (S) HIS RECOMMENDATION IS, ESSENTIALLY, TO GET AS
BROAD BASED A GROUP AS POSSIBLE, AND GET THEM ON TO THE
GROUND, AND CALL THEM A GOVERNMENT. HE DOES NOT BELIEVE
IT IS ESSENTIAL THAT THEY BE IN KABUL. THEY COULD BE
CLOSE TO THE BORDER AND DEALING WITH REFUGEE ISSUES.
ALTERNATIVELY, THEY COULD BE IN MAZAR-I-SHARIF IF THE
TOWN CAN BE SEIZED. THE AMIR'S POINT IS THAT ONCE A
GROUP CALLING ITSELF THE AFGHAN GOVERNMENT CAN BEGIN TO
SPEAK FROM THE SOIL OF AFGHANISTAN THEY CAN RAPIDLY TAKE
ON THE MANTLE OF AUTHORITY, AND PUSH THE TALIBAN INTO
THE ROLE OF INSURGENTS FIGHTING IN THE HILLS. THIS WILL
ALLOW A COUNTERPOINT TO THE POPULAR VIEW THAT THE U.S.
IS WAGING WAR ON, RATHER THAN TO LIBERATE AFGHANISTAN.

¶4. (S) SUBSIDIARY POINTS MADE BY THE AMIR INCLUDED THE
NEED TO PROTECT THE NEW GOVERNMENT WITH ISLAMIC, NOT
U.S. FORCES, AND THE RECOMMENDATION THAT SITES FOR
DISCUSSING AND LAUNCHING SUCH A GOVERNMENT INCLUDE
CONSIDERATION OF SAUDI ARABIA, PREFERABLY MECCA, TO GIVE
IT A HOLY CAST. HE THOUGHT TURKEY, AND PERHAPS,
PAKISTAN WOULD BE HELPFUL.

¶5. (S) THE AMIR ALSO LAID INTO AL JAZEERA WITH EVEN
MORE THAN HIS USUAL GUSTO. HE DECLAIMED AT LENGTH ON

HOW DANGEROUS THIS STATION IS, HOW IT IS ESSENTIALLY ONE-SIDED PROPAGANDA, AND ALLEGED THAT THE AL JAZEERA CORRESPONDENT IN KABUL (HE WAS SOME UNCERTAIN HERE, IT COULD HAVE BEEN KANDAHAR) IS ACTUALLY NOT A JOURNALIST, BUT AN "AFGHAN ARAB." HIS BASIC THRUST WAS TO ASK WHETHER THE UNITED STATES AND SAUDI ARABIA COULD NOT SOMEHOW PULL THE PLUG OF ARABSAT AND MAKE AL JAZEERA OCCASIONALLY DISAPPEAR FROM THE AIRWAVES.

16. (S) COMMENT: THE AMIR IS FIXATED WITH THE NEED TO SHOW POLITICAL MOVEMENT ON THE GROUND IN AFGHANISTAN. THE FIXATION IS AN ACTION-ORIENTED MANIFESTATION OF THE GENERAL PUBLIC FRUSTRATION THAT THE BOMBING IS NOT BEING LINKED, IN WAYS THEY CAN SEE, TO AN ARTICULATED POLITICAL STRATEGY EXTENDING BEYOND ANTI-TERRORISM. THE AMIR AND THE PUBLIC HERE WANT TO KNOW ALSO THE CONDITIONS WHICH WOULD SHAPE AN END TO THE CURRENT PHASE OF THE WAR. IN THE ABSENCE OF BENCHMARKS TOWARDS WHICH WE CAN BE SEEN TO BE PROCEEDING, THE MILITARY CAMPAIGN BECOMES MORE DIFFICULT TO EXPLAIN. AS TO AL JAZEERA, THERE IS NO LOVE LOST BETWEEN THE BAHRAINIS AND THE QATARIS AND THE GOB HAS NEVER FELT MORE THAN CORDIAL DISTASTE FOR AL JAZEERA, EVEN AT THE BEST OF TIMES. WE WATCH AL-JAZEERA REGULARLY. SOME OF THE COVERAGE -- BUT NOT ALL -- IS BIASED. BUT WHAT IS HURTING US BADLY IS THE VISUALS, WOUNDED CIVILIANS AND DESPERATE REFUGEES, NOT THE COMMENTARY. IF AL JAZEERA WAS TURNED OFF, WE SUSPECT ITS POPULARITY WOULD SIMPLY PASS TO THE EVEN WORSE HIZBALLAH SATELLITE STATION AL MANAR, WHICH IS ALSO BROADCASTING CURRENTLY FROM AFGHANISTAN. FINALLY, ASSAULTING THE MEDIA WOULD DAMAGE OUR OWN CREDIBILITY. IN SHORT, WE ARE REPORTING THIS VIEW, NOT ADVOCATING IT.

MINIMIZE CONSIDERED

NEUMANN